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*With the compliments of the Author*

## INJUSTICE OF AMERICAN OPPOSITION TO PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE \*

ADDRESS OF DR. JOHN R. MCDILL, MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

I regret that it is necessary to take three minutes for my personal equation. Some of my opinions that reached the Islands recently were disposed of by the press of Manila as those of "an embittered surgeon," and the Governor-General, just before President Wilson requested his resignation, was quoted in regard to them as saying that "Dr. McDill did not leave the service of his own volition." One always looks for the animus of important statements. The Governor-General might have stated the whole truth while he was about it which was, strange as it may seem to one not conversant with things official there, that I did not accept my official appointment of my own volition; after two interviews I was told flatly that if I did not accept the position, I would be put out of business as far as it lay in the power of the government to do so. Having had all the evidence years before that I cared for of its ability to do this very thing, I accepted though with misgivings which were soon enough justified. Shortly thereafter I was obliged to sharply criticize a bureau chief's inexcusable neglect which was causing suffering of helpless people under my care. The result was a vicious attack on me by the most powerful and the most overwhelming official there in an attempt to destroy my reputation. I opposed his charges before him and the attack was abandoned, leaving the official in an unenviable light. The usual and expected followed; my resignation was demanded, no reason was given, and without being afforded a chance to defend myself, an appeal there being absurd, I resigned after a service of just ten months in a full official capacity. Before that time I taught surgery in the University of the Philippines for five years on a semi-official basis, and that my present views are not of recent origin my students will testify in that I annually exhorted them to hard work in order to deserve the best positions in the Philippine service, because I assured them that some day the American people would see things in their right light and their country and its institutions would be turned over to their rightful owners.

I volunteered for our war with Spain to free the Cubans, resigned my commission from Havana, but was asked to accept further service in the Philippines. During our military operations in the field we saw a most beautiful country, but week after week we passed through abandoned and silent towns, villages, and fields, full of touching evidences of happy communal and home life, and even of refinement. The women and children, the old and feeble, and the sick, were hiding unsheltered in the woods and mountains. We, a perfectly armed and equipped

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army of the most powerful republic in the world, were pursuing and killing sad-eyed little brown men and boys, who were scantily clothed, poorly nourished, and almost unarmed; but no soldier can call them cowards. It was all pitiful and so one sided. We did not understand what it was all about then and it is doubtful if the American people know yet. I am here at the solicitation of those who feel that I represent their point of view and my motives as stated in this paper are my own and are not from the loss of a job that was never sought or desired.

Since returning from the islands, I have felt a deep resentment against the indifference, ignorance, and prejudice existing among the American people in regard to the character of the Filipinos. Endeavoring to analyze the general attitude on the subject of Philippine Independence, it seems that the majority of Americans are indifferent. A conservative estimate is that eighty per cent of our people and ninety-five per cent of our capital have too much to do on this continent for years to come to take any interest in a country on the other side of the world, but from motives of national pride and on the assumption that whatever our nation has done has been the right thing, and further because none of their personal interests are concerned, most Americans welcome any arguments that justify our conduct as a nation. The destiny idea which was originally the catchword of the orator of the party then in power has come to be the belief of the majority, but traced to its source it is only another example of confounding God's intentions with our own desires. The American people have learned to think crookedly on this question. A study of the arguments of the small number who have given the subject any thought, in favor of the perpetuation of our present policy in the Philippines, shows them to be based on grounds all of which an experience of thirteen years in the Islands leads me to believe are unjustifiable. These grounds are, first, those based on faith in official and other representations and reports due to blind devotion to party creed and prestige; second, those based on religious and humanitarian motives; and third, those of an out and out imperialism.

Many eloquent men have preached the doctrine that the basis of all government should be the consent of the governed, that the imposition of our sovereignty on a weaker people by force of arms was a grievous wrong, not merely an academic question, as your platform of last year stated. The only true solution of this problem is found in right principles, and no policy that is a corollary of a blunder can ever be justified. These remarks, however, will be confined to an attempt to show how without basis in fact are the popular causes of faith in our present policy.

Applying to this question Lord Cromer's initial remarks in "Modern Egypt," it is evident that here in America, in the discussion of important public affairs, the public generally ends, though sometimes not till after a considerable lapse of time, in getting a correct idea of the general course of events, and of cause and effect of any special political incident. Inaccuracy of statement is speedily corrected and fallacies are exposed by a sifting of the facts by the press and in public debate. The truth

may for a time be obscured, but in the end the public will generally decide fairly.

In dealing with Philippine affairs these safeguards do not exist. American public opinion has in such cases to deal with a condition of affairs with which it is unfamiliar. It is disposed to apply arguments drawn from local experience only, to a state of things which does not admit of any such arguments being applied without great qualifications. The number of persons who possess sufficiently accurate information to instruct the public is limited, and amongst those persons it not infrequently happens that many have some particular cause to advance, or some favorite political theory to defend. There is no certain guarantee that inaccuracies of statement will be corrected, or that fallacies will be exposed.

The main cause of faith in our policy has been the official report. With an inexplicable blindness, the American people have failed to see that in this question the official was committed to the justification of a certain policy and however honest or well-meaning he might be, that policy would give a bias not only as to the nature of the facts he would observe but also to his interpretation of them. The official report on Philippine matters has been practically unassailable; it has been accepted as the last word on the subject. Our officials have had not only an almost monopoly of the facts but a complete monopoly of their interpretation. The same fact often meets with different treatments to meet different needs. I have myself contributed to the making of official reports, which were in the main a collection of all the incidents and opinions favorable to the department concerned, and colored by the private interpretation of the official in charge.

On the arrival of these reports in Washington the public, as a rule uninterested, may, through the agency of the sensational or politically biased press, seize upon some incident which strikes the popular imagination and view it only in the light of American prejudice and experience. That this is true who that has observed the wide spread hysterical treatment of the recent official reports of "Slavery" in the Philippines can doubt? Slavery is a word of such ominous portent to the American public that in its inherited horror of such a thing existing under the American flag, it does not consider the circumstances of this accusation or question its truth. The American Commission was responsible for all Philippine legislation for seven years; its official reports of 1901 show cognizance of slavery among the wild tribes of Northern Luzon, nevertheless it did not prohibit it by law until 1911. Constabulary reports of 1907 show that some persons purchased in their childhood by Filipinos from neighboring Igorots were working without pay; attempts to return them to their homes were resisted by them, the so-called slaves. Knowing this fact for six years, and having ample power to bring about the remedy, why has the misleading and exaggerated report to the world of this condition, and the charge of moral turpitude against the Philippine Assembly for not enacting a law against it, been so long delayed?

If such a serious charge were made by any official against a legislative body in America, the public would consider not only

the possibility of error or exaggeration, but also the relations between the accuser and the accused. If it were known that there had long existed an antagonism between them, as is the fact in this case, culminating at one time in a suit for libel against the leading paper of the Filipinos by the official, at another time in a demand by the Assembly for the removal of the official, following a gratuitous charge by him that they were a nation of cowards, some animus might be inferred and the public would not be so ready to credit such startling statements. That this is only a mild suggestion as to the state of feeling between their official accuser and the Filipino people is apparent from the able chapter on his character written two years ago by Judge Blount in his book, "The American Occupation of the Philippines." Nor does the American public in its self-righteousness stop to consider that much worse conditions exist here in its own country. Our own home Sunday paper which displayed on its front page "Human Beings Bought and Sold Like Cattle in the Philippines," carried on its other pages five inconspicuous notices of even worse barter in girls and children in this country.

The statement of official facts in regard to homogeneity, common language, and literacy, are presented in a medley of inconsistency. As an example;—the Schurman Commission of 1899 reports that the lack of a common language seems to be no barrier between the natives; that they readily learn each other's dialects; while by other officials this is offered as presenting an insuperable obstacle to the existence of a national life. This language objection is really amusing when one considers that the government has been conducted since the American occupation in a language that few of the American officials can speak.

The degree of literacy at the occupation of the islands is given officially by Mr. Taft as the percentage of literacy ten years later, after hundreds of thousands of school children had passed through the public schools, and no comment is made on the peculiar conditions in this regard in that there were large numbers not included in the literacy percentage of the census report who could *read*, so that instead of eighty per cent of illiteracy officially quoted as an argument against independence, 55.5 per cent is the real figure, even ten years ago. At the present time it will probably be found to be about forty per cent.

The question of homogeneity finds defenders even among the supporters of our continued sovereignty. Bishop Brent, than whom there has been no more vigorous and competent student of these people, pictured the Filipinos to you here at Mohonk three years ago as a homogeneous race and proved it, while Mr. Taft in his protest against the Jones bill urges their heterogeneity.

While the reports other than those of officials sent out from the Islands might seem worthy of credence, and be entitled to weight as evidence in the matter, an intimate knowledge of conditions in Manila reveals that they are not. While these reports are not censored in the strict sense of the word, all expression of opinion not only by office-holders but by newspapers and business men who are all more or less dependent on government patronage and approval and official friendship, is censored by a censorship which in effect is as strict as that of a military one; namely, the censorship of subservience and fear. In other words,

the Philippine Archipelago is the one place under the American flag in which public opinion does not exist.

The reports of ex-soldiers, enlarging on the ferocity of the people with whom they were fighting, of tourists, who, if of prominence, are entertained by the higher officials and shown round the Islands to be sure that they get the right point of view, are naturally not without bias, while the majority of press and magazine articles and platform lectures furnished by these and others, who make three weeks' trips through the Islands, are for the most part sensational trash, nearly always a violation of the truth, and derogatory to the Filipinos, whom many of them have never met except in the servant class. That the unintelligent reports of this nature have any weight is to those who know their value almost incredible of belief, but, remembering the influence that the opinions of English and European tourists in our own country had in the earlier days in giving us our only-recently-lived-down reputation on the continent of Europe, and which furnished us with so much amusement, it seems probable that a great deal of the pitiful misinformation on matters Philippine can be traced to this source.

In addition to this opposition arising from party prejudice and misinformation is that of those who feel that the religious and social uplift of the people would be retarded, or even that the good already accomplished would be entirely lost. For the holders of these views, we must have a great deal of respect; they should, at least, be given the credit of being sincere, but at the same time I think they are mistaken and a great many of them are in ignorance of the real conditions. We find people who are surprised to learn that the Filipinos are already Christians and devout members of the Roman Catholic Church. There are those who know it but who feel that much is to be done through social service, in hospitals, dormitories and training schools for nurses. While every one realizes to the fullest extent the excellent work accomplished in these institutions, it is difficult to see in what way they will be handicapped by the granting of independence. No one is better aware than I am of the appreciation of the Filipinos of this part of the work of the American people among them. There is every reason to believe that, as the results of this work become more apparent, the appreciation of it will increase, and, instead of being hindered by a native regime, if this work is continued, as it will be cordially invited to do, the disinterestedness of it will be still further apparent to the Filipinos, and they will esteem it and co-operate in a corresponding measure. If for any reason any denomination has been the recipient of government support and favor which they fear will be withdrawn under native control, it must not be forgotten that it has received more than it should expect, even though it may have been of material assistance to the Government.

The alleged opposition of the Catholic Church to independence has attracted much attention. It seems incredible that the Church should be guilty of such a short-sighted policy. Possibly the wide publication of the personal views of Cardinal Gibbons has given some foundation to this idea, and the utterances of certain individual members have perhaps further strengthened

it, but it is doubtful if this has anything to do with the policy of the Church; some of her best men claim that it has not. The Church has nothing to fear from independence; the Filipinos love it as few other people do; it holds them by its response to their every need in a spiritual way and will no doubt continue to do so, whatever the form of government.

The out and out imperialist view is much commoner than is either admitted or suspected. But what a shoddy imperialism it is. It is the view of practically every place holder in the Islands, and of those who are acquainted with the beauties and resources of the country and who see a promise of profit therein. I doubt if there are ten Americans in the Islands who ever give a thought to the idea of holding them as a trust for the people. There was a time when this was loudly shouted as a political war cry, but the frank imperialism of a recent article by Professor Bernard Moses, once a commissioner over there, I fancy finds a more responsive chord in the breasts of our countrymen with personal interests at stake. The sentiment is distinctly that of indefinite possession. The spirit of imperialism is unconsciously bred in Americans long resident there, in some by the inherited prejudice that a race of a different color is inferior, and in many by the abundance, cheapness, and obsequiousness of the servants to which they are unaccustomed at home. The imperialist view deserves nothing but contempt; it is that of a greedy child who has no thought for the future. Are the imperialists ready to carry the thing to its ultimate issue? Will they fight to hold the Islands either against the Filipinos themselves or against a foreign foe? No one has a truer touch on the pulse of the Filipino people than General Bandholtz, Chief of the native Constabulary, whose recent official report states that the Filipinos show signs of revolt unless their status is authoritatively defined. Would the imperialists send our army again shooting and singing their old song,

Underneath the starry flag  
Civilize them with a Krag?

No nation should lay claim to possessions that it is not willing to protect and hold. How popular would a war be to hold these Islands? That is what our present policy commits us to, whether we admit it or not. Twice this year have we seen its shadow, once with Japan, in which trouble we exposed them to the dangers of our international complications and ourselves to unknown disaster, and once in General Bandholtz's report, with the Filipinos themselves. Giant Asia with its 900,000,000 people is rapidly awakening to modern civilization and life and as its renaissance developes no Western nation can maintain a foothold within its confines without an herculean effort.

The fact remains that the average American regards the Filipino as a half-savage being of a low order of intelligence, doubtful morals, and of no political capacity. Of the clear-eyed, sober, alert, intelligent and industrious Filipino, burning with patriotism and love for his idolized country, they know nothing, or make no account. You are told that he is childish, conceited, vain, dishonest, unreliable and lazy. I do not lay claim to any special virtue or acute perception of the good qualities of my

fellow-man, but I have not found the Filipinos to be such, or for that matter to differ very widely from the average man of any country, taking racial characteristics into account. They have their defects, so have we, but many of what have been considered their faults are simply racial characteristics in which they differ from us and are not to be overcome by even centuries of our sovereignty. They are not hard to understand; as one writer says it requires no special gift to do it; anyone can, if he will give up his prejudices and his self-righteousness and try.

I have met them as men on an equal footing. I count some as my best friends. It has been my good fortune to know some of them as intimately as only closest friend, priest, or doctor gets to know a man in his home life, and there is nothing finer anywhere. There are too many men and women of good hard common sense and real patriotism among the Filipinos, and who have the general good of the whole people at heart to allow their native land to be wrecked by any hot-headed and unscrupulous politicians. If they believed in their hearts that independence would be the everlasting ruin and damnation of their country, they would say so. Theirs are the real interests at stake and they are national.

The Filipinos have justified every trust placed in them so far in public service, from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Bench down to the day laborer on the docks; as mechanics, foremen, artisans and laborers for the Army, Civil Government, and public service corporations, whenever their co-operation is secured, they have given the greatest satisfaction. For confirmation of this I refer you to the Report of 1907, War Department, Vol. 8, for statements concerning their intelligence, capability and willingness. Back of these is a large agricultural population, the real strength of the country and the real promise of stability. The confidence of President Wilson in granting them practical autonomy this month by giving them a majority in their upper legislative house will be fully justified.

Their notable qualities of courtesy, dignity and hospitality, their marked artistic and musical inclinations, their eloquence and grace in public speaking need no elaboration here.

The Filipino woman is unique in her high position of influence and freedom of action among her people, and in her business ability. Even in the uneducated maturer woman one is often struck by the evidences of force, dignity, and strength of character reflected in her face and bearing. Many of the older women of this class remind one of the type seen in our capable old Irish women. The younger women as students, nurses and teachers are as virtuous, capable, charming, and sensible a set of girls as one could meet in any country, and their aptitude for teaching, nursing and the medical profession, will do more for the physical regeneration of their race than all other influences together. The women of the middle and upper classes are notably characterized by an exquisite manner and in graciousness and poise are unexcelled by the women of any country. If, as John Adams has said, "The manners of women are the surest criterion by which to determine whether a republican government is practicable in a nation or not," then the Filipino people are pre-eminently fitted to govern themselves. When final action on the

suffrage question is taken there, the women should be given the franchise.

We hear a lot of our unbounded beneficence. We have given them the best we have, but it was the least we could do for them, having paid for our philanthropies out of their pockets. They appreciate a great deal of it, but all of our large hopes and plans for their industrial development, from those of Mr. Taft when he stated in his report of 1900 (page 34 Senate Document 112) that the true and lasting method of pacification was the introduction of American capital, to those of recent times, have had total lack of co-operation, open hostility and have evolved the slogan, "We prefer poverty and freedom to prosperity and subjection." In this connection, compare what England has done in the Federated Malay States under a mild and benevolent protectorate with recognition of the native rulers, which has not cost her a life or a farthing, with our achievements in the Philippines after employing an army of 120,000 men, fighting for six years, and expending from \$600,000,000 to \$1,000,000,000 to subjugate and assimilate them — enough treasure to build two Panama Canals. Industrial development is possible only with their co-operation and this can be secured only by a political relation with us that is satisfactory to them. They were not able to resist our arms, but they can and do and will resist development of their islands by foreign capital while under the sovereignty of a foreign power, if that sovereignty is made a condition of their development.

In the face of their continued demands for independence and their undoubted capabilities, which they have rapidly developed since the American occupation in the hope of attaining the goal of their desires by what Mabini characterized as a peaceful contention for their rights, has the United States any moral right to much longer withhold self-government? Applying Mr. Taft's remarks in regard to the return of the Friars, to continuance of American sovereignty in the Philippines "The question is not whether the feeling against it is justified or not, but whether it exists. It does not seem to us therefore to aid in reaching a conclusion to point out that we have done them a great and incalculable good. Be it so. Ought we to 'force our sovereignty' on them in the face of a deep popular feeling against it? A popular and deep seated prejudice of any people is not to be disregarded because it cannot stand our tests of reason or evidence. It must be reckoned with."

Their present political status is such that Filipinization of the public service can take place as rapidly as their wise men advise, and our separation of ourselves from their affairs should soon come about without damage to them or loss of dignity to us.

It is time that we stood upright and with our feet firmly on the bottom of this question, before some outsider calls our attention to the fact that the waters in which we have been so helplessly floundering are but knee deep after all.